



Two local schools receive millions in new construction funding

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Jacoby Creek Charter School and Peninsula Union Elementary will soon be more than \$2 million richer, combined. The two Humboldt County schools received news from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's office Thursday, announcing that they have been selected as recipients of the \$412 million in construction grants awarded to California schools.

The State Allocation Board awarded the construction grants to 109 schools throughout the state — half of which was allocated from Proposition 1D funds, part of the governor's strategic growth plan approved by voters in 2006. Peninsula Union was awarded \$500,499, and Jacoby Creek will get \$1,737,356.

Jacoby Creek Superintendent and Principal Eric Grantz still had to pinch himself after receiving word this week of the \$1.7 million that was awarded to his school. "I've been working on this for three years," he said. "So yesterday when I got this, it was like, 'hallelujah.'"

Grantz started the grant application process three years ago, and had to jump through numerous bureaucratic hoops to even see the finish line. "The California Department of Education has to approve the site plans, the Office of Public Schools Construction has to determine the funding amount and eligibility oversight on all of the planning and design work, the Department of State Architects has to actually approve the plans themselves, the School Finance Authority has to assure that you're in financially sound condition and the State Allocation Board has to do the final approval on all those plans," he explained — and that doesn't include local construction guidelines that have to be met. "It's been three years of pushing the boulder up a big steep hill," he said.

Now that he's at the top of the hill, he doesn't plan to waste time looking back. "We're starting construction on Monday," he said. Grantz said the funding for Jacoby Creek School will go into building three new energy-efficient classrooms to house the middle school students that will be constructed by Danco Builders.

"They're built out of all recyclable materials, they're highly energy-efficient, they have indirect lighting — it's really revolutionary building," Grantz said. The classrooms are designed by a metal fabrication company out of the Bay area called Project FROG. Examples of the innovative classroom buildings can be seen at www.projectfrog.com.

Grantz said the new buildings will be replacing existing portables that are “dark and energy-inefficient.”

“This is really about Jacoby Creek trying to move in a much greener direction,” Grantz said of the new buildings and a recent solar project completed at the school, as well. Funded through the California Energy Commission, 184 solar panels were installed on the gymnasium roof last month, along with a 30,000-watt photo-voltaic system that is anticipated to save 25 percent of the school’s electrical energy consumption and save them approximately \$7,000 per year.

Grantz said his school also has a “comprehensive recycling” program in effect as well.

The construction of the new energy efficient classrooms will begin next week with the first step of “site prep,” Grantz said. After that, he projected the buildings to be deployed within about six weeks, and then the interiors will be completed and ready for students by October.

“It goes on forever,” Grantz said of the long three year road to get the funding approved. “Well, not forever. It goes on for three years. It’s over. Now I get to hand it to Danco.”